

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) announced a \$4.5 million U.S. Department of Education grant for the Early Reading First program at South San Antonio Independent School District. The three-year grant will enhance the early language, literacy, and pre-reading development of preschool-age children, particularly those from low-income families.

“We all know that education is one of the greatest predictors of future success,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “Helping our youngest students now will not only ensure their success but will strengthen our nation as a whole.”

The grant will increase early learning opportunities for pre-K students and expand library resources at every district elementary campus.

“We are always happy to have Congressman Rodriguez’s support and are very pleased with the news,” said South San Antonio ISD Superintendent Ronald Durbon. “We want to start our children on the right track so that they can experience academic success in the future.” Mourette Hodge, Director of the Early Reading First programs at South San, said the program has the ability to transform lives.

“The Early Reading First will continue to help build the educational foundation that our children need to succeed in school and to break the cycle of poverty,” Hodge said.

Early Reading First is part of the U.S. Department of Education’s “Good Start, Grow Smart” initiative, designed to improve existing early education programs into centers of excellence that provide high quality early education to young children. The emphasis is on helping students from low-income families.

Currently, 88.3 percent of all South San Antonio ISD students are considered economically disadvantaged, according to the Texas Education Agency. Since 2003, Early Reading First has provided nearly \$600 million in grants to support Pre-K programs that improve school readiness for young children. SSAISD currently has emergent literacy programs that offer high-quality instruction to young children.

The Early Reading First Grant will fund SSAISD’s new Systematic, Targeted, and Appropriate Reading Strategies (STARS) program.

STARS will continue to provide early literacy instruction for preschool-aged children by incorporating the latest technologies available to school districts.

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